

NEW LOWELL OFFERING

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"Phenomenon"

Spring 1979

NEW LOWELL OFFERING

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EDITORIAL

This issue initiates the third year of publication of the NEW LOWELL OFFERING. The magazine was begun primarily as a medium to present work produced in the Women's Studies Program at the University of Lowell. Thanks now to the response to our first issues, the NEW LOWELL OFFERING has grown to include a diversity of written work and visual arts on women's themes representing not only others at the university but also those from the community. Our readership reflects this diversity as well.

But while the response has been gratifying, our continued success depends on contributions and support from you. We welcome your essays, graphics, fiction, poetry, reviews and criticism—work that reflects the lives and thinking of and about women in the Greater Lowell community. We urge your letters and comments as well. Please send your "offerings," and your subscriptions (see blank inside), to:

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The cover design by Stella Sawyer is a photo-silkscreen using acetate and glue reduction technique.





ADAH'S JOURNEY

by Sari Jozokos

Adah jogged at a comfortable pace along the narrow strip of beach. Sharp cliffs of mossy brown rock towered on her left. On the other side was the open foggy water. Grasping at her Adidas sneakers, the waves caressed the sand. It had been nine months since she floated into this place. She was a foreigner in an insane world filled with power and exploitation. Not only were most of the people used and abused by the powerful "ruling class" as her roommate called them, but this odd society raped and destroyed the land, stifled the creativity of their young, and isolated individuals from all but a few of their kind. It's such a lonely life. Men, women, rich, poor live divided in this status-conscious society.

What an absurd joke it had been when her roommate announced that this land is a democracy. As far as Adah could tell these people didn't even understand the word, never mind live in such a society. A land of manipulated fools she thought, human robots.

She'd softened slightly towards the people after living here awhile, realizing it's not the fault of each individual but of a decaying society.

Her roommate found Adah's world just as awful, with no "normal" childbirths. "Test-tube babies!" she had gasped. "Free sex, a society with no morals: a bunch of people, friends, just decide to raise a child together? It seems irresponsible."

She seemed appalled, too, at the idea of no careers, just as much as Adah was shocked by the way individuals stagnated in one line of work here on land. Enjoying physical as well as mental labor, and also the special life machine assignments, Adah was happy to change jobs twice a year.

"Mama, come get me, Mama!" shrieked a tiny girl interrupting the steady rhythm of running feet and the roaring ocean. The small child ran to the security of her mother who smiled as the jogging woman passed by on the desolate beach.

Such a strange way to raise children, teaching them isolation and fear.

She glanced into the sparkling eyes of the child, remembering their own child, their daughter. A beautiful girl, who this very evening would celebrate the third anniversary of her homeday. Adah longed to see the young girl, thinking back to the excitement and preparation for the baby's homeday....

The brightly lit office was filled with color. Adah, two men and another woman nervously walked up to a small table. They were looking over some brochures on child care when a smiling receptionist greeted them.

"You'd like to make a contract to be parents? I'll explain the requirements and your obligations. Then you'll have time to make your final decision."

"First, there must be at least three and no more than six of you per child. No problem there I see. Second, you must all live in the same home with the child until she or he reaches legal adult age. That's fifteen years you understand, quite a long time to spend with the same people. Once your child has entered your home you may not break the contract."

Adah felt secure in these people who would love the child as much as she.

"There are a few things we'd like to suggest for the happiness and health of the child and your adjustment to her or him. It's recommended that at least two of you begin at once taking hormone pills so that

lactation can be established. This is good for a baby emotionally as well as physically. It's also recommended that at least one of you be experienced."

Adah glanced at one of the men who had been eyeing the baby pictures which hung behind the receptionist. Having a little experience with a young son who met with unfortunate death, this man felt he should raise another child to forget his grief and help some new parents.

After reading and signing their contracts the four parents-to-be were instructed to see the counselor. They walked together down a long narrow hall with many brightly colored doors on each side. Pictures of children with smiling faces hung along the pale yellow walls. Soft music could vaguely be heard as Adah and her friends anxiously discussed the coming months.

They smiled and laughed as they examined the pictures of "newborns." Adah yearned to have a child around, who would play and laugh, struggle to get older, and bring youthful ideas into her mind....

The sound of a pair of distant running feet brought Adah back to reality. Another runner, also a woman, was coming towards her. Adah saw her tanned legs pound up and down leaving distorted footprints in the wet sand. Her breasts bounced noticeably as she passed by Adah with a nod and a short smile.

Breasts have a funny meaning around here. She couldn't understand everyone's desire for large breasts. Many men she came to know seemed to have an insatiable desire to look at and fondle large breasts. She supposed it was almost an envy, to have something that sustains life, that nurtures and satisfies basic needs. Adah had a difficult time understanding such a culture as she thought of the breasted men where she came from....

"As you can see in these slides," stated the counselor, "men's bodies remain exactly the same except for the growth of the breast. There is no change in body hair, testicles, penis, or the sound of one's voice. How many of you are thinking of nursing?"

"All except me," said the semi-experienced man. "I just nursed recently. Now I'll have to wait about five years."

"True. Unlike women," began the counselor, "men must continue to take the hormone pills while nursing the baby. Once

a man has milk in the glands he should nurse for only one year or find his physical characteristics will drastically change. Eventually he will reach a point of permanent impotence."

"Excuse me," interrupted Adah, "but could you make this brief? I'm working in the depths this half year. The harvest is going on so I must return to the fields. I still have to refill my air tanks before I go back."

The counselor reluctantly gave the three their large pale blue hormone pills to take for six months, until Daria, the small infant girl came to them.

Unaware of her loving parents, of life itself, she was slowly growing in the nursery with all the other "machine babies." No birth defects or stillborns in the glass dome buried beneath the waves; all infants were healthy and welcome....

Adah abruptly sat down on the moist sand as tears welled up in her eyes. She imagined the celebration that Daria would have tonight and wondered what sort of gift the child would ask for. A cuddly puppy or a week of ice cream for dessert would bring great joy to Daria.

Adah missed Daria and the "family" so far below the ocean. She remembered home, miles below the struggling world, a dome of life within the world of the fish. Holding life, and Daria, the dome also held Adah's heart.

Tears flowed freely from her eyes. Salty drops mixed with the salty sand. Adah stood up and started jogging back to the lonely apartment. Darkness came creeping along the water bringing more solitude, more yearning for familiar faces.

After finishing her meal, Adah decided to row the dingy out onto the water, and gaze into the life-giving ocean in recognition of Daria's homeday.

She walked down to the beach and started pushing the small rowboat across the sand towards the tumbling waves.

"Need a hand sweetie?" came a deep voice from the shadows.

"I can manage, thank you."

"A pretty little girl like you shouldn't be out there in the dark."

"I'm a grown woman and I can manage just fine." To escape the menacing voice Adah hurriedly jumped into the boat and drifted towards the rising moon. Riding up and down with the waves, the tiny boat bounced around, making it difficult for Adah to look into the stormy water. A

strong wind blew the hair from her face. Warm salty water once more streamed down her cheeks.

Adah thought back to the last time she was out on the open water. It was her homeday. Her gift from two of her parents had been a trip to the surface, a view of the outside savage earth. Adah had been marveling at the strong wind in her face and the stars so far overhead when a huge wave came over the top of the sea sledge and washed her into the water. She couldn't manage to get back to the submarine, but was flung onto the shore of this odd world where she must spend the rest of her life.

Adah now looked deep into the water hoping to see some kind of life, an escape from voices in the dark. She longed to leave this place where girls remained girls, never changing to women. She wanted to be touched by a person, not a man or a woman, just a person.

"Adah! Adah!" came a young sorrow-filled voice from across the water. She felt

the coolness of the sea calling to her, reaching with its spray of fingers, drawing her into the life, the end of the savage world under the sun. Adah could stand the solitude no longer and fell into the soothing arms of the water. She waved her arms and yelled until she realized no one would be on the water. She let herself hang limp. The water took her.

When she woke up she was in a warm bed in a colorful room. A familiar melody was playing. Hearing some sound on the other side of the room Adah turned to find the cause of the noise. It was Daria.

"Adah, I've missed you!" said Daria almost screaming. She started talking very fast, nearly hysterically. "I told them you'd be there. We all missed you so much. They said you were gone forever. That's what I wanted anyway—for my homeday, to look for you. They wouldn't say no. I missed you." Daria wrapped her tiny arms around Adah and squeezed hard. Adah hugged back.

• • •

Jan. 22, 1895 ... A young lady, who was enjoying the scenery, was surprised by a highwayman on a bicycle who demanded her money and her jewels. As she was taking the chain off her neck, he stepped aside to light a cigarette, when quick as thought, the victim jumped upon the bicycle and escaped. Reaching the village, she gave the alarm, and the thief was captured.—*Haverhill Evening Bulletin*

August 7, 1894 ... Young Saphead—"Do you know, Miss Vassar, I've a great mind to frighten you by wocking the boat!" Miss Vassar (an athletic young woman)—"A young man like you tried that with me once, and the boat UPSET." Saphead—"Did it weally? What did you do?" "I swam ashore and notified the coroner."—*Haverhill Evening Bulletin*



WITHIN EACH, GOD

by Eva Apfelbaum

"Each man has God within
God is within each man."
I passed, reading this sign
On Sunday.
Someone across the street
Ascended, we descended.

Crunched newspaper,
Form forward bended
Couldn't tell
Whether woman or man
Its smallness crossed
To us, we stopped.

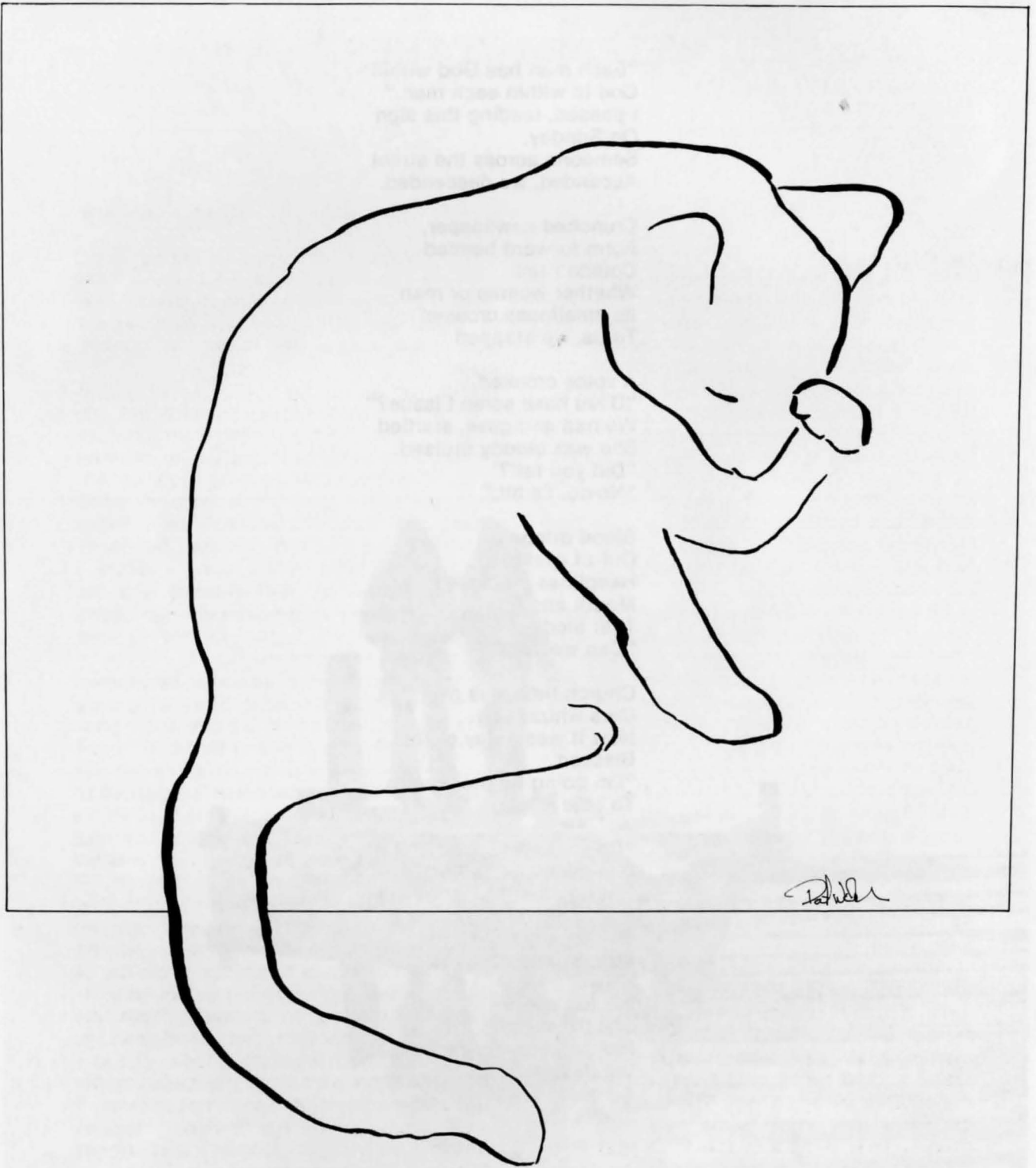
A voice croaked,
"D'ieu have some t'issue?"
We had and gave, startled.
She was bloody bruised.
"Did you fall?"
"No-oo, I's hit."

Blood dripped
Out of eyebrows,
Headlines disclosed
Mouth and lips
That bled.
"Can we help?"

Church time was over,
Cars whizzed by.
Now it was a day of rest
Blessed.
"I'm going up the square
To take a bus."

"Do you have your fare?"
She shook her wilted head,
"I'll be all right," she said.
We passed some money
She took her fair share
And returned the rest.

We felt a sob,
She thanked us.
Her painfulness ascended,
We descended,
All going homeward...
Thank God!



WELFARE MOTHER

My mother woke up one morning and my father was gone. He left without a warning. People blamed my mother for driving him away. It was at least six months before she realized he wasn't coming back. She was confused: her home economics courses hadn't prepared her for this. I was eleven, a child used to lots of toys for Christmas and meat for supper. People blamed my mother for not always providing them.

The TV commercials never sympathized with our financial position. They convinced us of the need to purchase worthless items; so when the first of the month came we rushed out to buy them. By the end of the month we survived on Fluffernutters and Kool-Aid. People blamed my mother for being irresponsible.

All her life my mother was told the proper place for a woman was in the home. But after my father left and she received welfare payments, people blamed her for sponging off the taxpayer. This sort of talk pressured her into getting a factory job at welfare wages. She got up at five each morning and didn't get home until five at night. One afternoon while she was working, I was playing a game of tag on the fire escape when I fell three stories and broke my arm. She was blamed for letting me run free. Since her job had no medical insurance she was forced back on welfare. People blamed her for being too lazy to keep a job.

When people found out I didn't always eat the best meals and saw that my clothes were usually tattered, they blamed my mother for not caring. In order to provide for me better, she took a part-time waitressing job at a local barroom to help supplement the meager welfare check. The owner of the bar knew that a job could disqualify her from welfare, so he was able to pay her only 25¢ an hour, plus tips, knowing she couldn't complain. When people found out, they

blamed my mother for being a welfare-cheater.

Sometimes children teased me for being a welfare child and wearing clothes from Goodwill. When I became angry and hit one of them, the parents of the child would blame my mother for raising a trouble-maker.

She was lonely for companionship, but men wanted nothing to do with her because of me. Still, the welfare investigators checked late at night to make sure she was alone. She gradually became more dependent on alcohol. Slowly she got to the point where she was intoxicated nearly every night. No one had time to help, but many had time to blame her for being a "drunk."

After awhile my only release was the street. When my anger became destructive people blamed my mother for having been too permissive with me.

Finally, my mother can also be blamed for ruining the end of what should logically be a classic, sad story. As she and I grew older something happened that I still can't explain. We slowly came to recognize our mutual self-destructions and we agreed to help each other. Her alcoholism caused me pain and my increasingly violent behavior hurt her. We agreed to curtail our vices for each other. As corny as it sounds, it worked. It was a long hard struggle that didn't come overnight. But we won. Instead of being killed on the streets or serving time, I am trying to focus my anger on its source rather than striking out blindly. Instead of bringing on an early death, my mother has realized her weakness to alcohol and has abstained. Today she is a happy woman with a strong belief in her own self-worth and the worth of others.

Of course, nobody "blamed" her for bringing on her own recovery and nobody "blamed" her for my survival.

WELFARE MOTHER

PATTERNS

by Peggy Leedberg

You appear womanhood
Tie with my sisters
Wearing gown of fear
Covered by cloak of hope

First calendar
Scratches on stone
Beads of leather
Needlepoint strength

Embroidered guest
At my mother's door
Painfully marked
Pattern of minute stitches

My daughter
Carries your tracings
Lightly sketched
Intricate unfilled pattern

Appear womanhood
On psaltry play
Our summer song
While they pass

Silently sewing in the dark

THE PATRICIA PRINCIPLE

by JOAN BOYD



...in its nature by its ...
...is ...
...the ...
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THE PATRICIA PRINCIPLE

by Joan Rothschild

Before *The Peter Principle*¹ was published most of us were aware of the appalling incompetency and mismanagement in everyday bureaucratic life. From telephones to transportation to government, things did have an alarming tendency to go wrong. What we lacked was a theory to explain why. *The Peter Principle* conveniently supplied the theory.

The argument of the book is simple. Hierarchy, by its very nature, puts employees into jobs for which they are incompetent. A person is hired for a job. Being qualified and wanting to get ahead, the employee does well and is promoted. However, having risen on the basis of current performance, the employee may well be unqualified for the next higher level job, and therefore be incompetent at it. There is the skilled mechanic who is a poor foreman, the outstanding teacher who becomes an incompetent principal, the efficient file clerk who is a poor supervisor, the able assistant manager who cannot perform as manager. The tendency, inevitable, gives rise to "The Peter Principle": "In a Hierarchy Every Employee Tends to Rise to His Level of Incompetence."²

The employee may pass through several levels of the promotion hierarchy before reaching the level of incompetence. But because the push continues upward, sooner or later everyone will arrive at "Final Placement," the job in which the employee will be incompetent. And so we have Peter's "corollary": "*In time, every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out its duties.*"³

Thus the operations of modern society, at every level, are run, inevitably, by incompetents. Things are bound to go wrong.

There are a number of minor quibbles one can have with the Peter Principle and

its corollary. The most obvious one is the underlying assumption that employees are automatically promoted on the basis of performance in a current job. Although pull will speed the employee up the promotion ladder to his level of incompetence, job performance is held to be the fundamental promotion criterion.

But despite this somewhat naive presumption that meritocracy rules in the working world, the Peter Principle and its corollary hold up fairly well. That is, until the theory tries to explain why things ever go right. The authors admit, quite rightly, that some useful work does get done. How is this possible? We must look again to the Peter Principle. Since everyone is doing his best in order to climb the greasy pole, there are bound to be some jobs at varying levels filled by competent employees. "*Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence.*"⁴

But how do we determine how much work will get done and how many competent employees will be functioning at a given time? Organizations do function, goods and services are produced—perhaps not always of great quality or to our liking—with some consistency and regularity. Bureaucracies have an amazing ability to survive. Clearly, the regular production of competent work is not a random thing, as the Peter Principle theory would lead us to believe. There is a category of competent employees who can be counted on to do the useful work, regularly and consistently.

By a strange myopia, the Peter Principle has overlooked this particular category of competent employees. This is especially odd since the category comprises 41% of the full-time work force. I refer to the secretaries, file clerks, nurses, service

employees and others in lower level jobs who form a permanent category of competent employees who do the work. The category is permanent because its members are excluded from the promotion ladder system. Its members stay in the jobs for which they are hired. The category, of course, is women.

The Peter Principle, therefore, needs the simple corrective of THE PATRICIA PRINCIPLE:

IN A HIERARCHY EVERY FEMALE EMPLOYEE TENDS TO REMAIN BELOW HER LEVEL OF COMPETENCE, WHILE EVERY MALE EMPLOYEE TENDS TO RISE TO HIS LEVEL OF INCOMPETENCE;

followed by the Patricia Corollary:

WHILE IN TIME EVERY DECISION-MAKING POST TENDS TO BE OCCUPIED BY A MALE EMPLOYEE WHO IS INCOMPETENT TO CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES, WORK IS ACCOMPLISHED BY A PERMANENT UNDERCLASS OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES WHO ARE NEVER ALLOWED TO REACH THEIR LEVEL OF INCOMPETENCE.

It is not accurate to imply that the Peter Principle totally ignores women. Indeed, there are a number of examples of female employees in the book. There is the woman math teacher who knows nothing about her subject. There is another female teacher so literal that she nearly lets her students drown because the emergency bell hasn't rung. A "salesgirl" provides an example of "super-incompetence." Unlike examples of male employees who are competent in comparable low level jobs—showing incompetence only when promoted—these female examples are incompetent in the jobs for which they are hired. (There are no examples of women in high level jobs.) Then there is the "wife" who "nags" her husband for refusing a promotion (which he supposedly has the good sense to know would bring him to his level of incompetence); the same wife, goaded by her mother, leaves the husband who commits suicide!

Although the women cited as examples are in low level jobs, they are never perceived as a category. There is one major exception: the category of housewives. Or, one should say, "incompetent housewives." According to *The Peter Principle*, the majority of women have reached their level of incompetence as housewives.

There are several examples. Showing the relevance of proverbs to incompetency theory, the authors state:

"Woman's work is never done" is a sad commentary on the high proportion of women who reach their level of incompetence as housewives.⁵

Or take the description of the "phonophiliac," an example of an employee who has reached Final Placement. This individual who "rationalizes his incompetence by complaining that he cannot keep in close enough touch with colleagues and subordinates" has a desk covered with phones and assorted intercommunication devices. A paragraph in parenthesis follows:

(Phonophilia, by the way, is nowadays increasingly seen among women who reached their level of incompetence as housewives. Typically, an elaborate microphone-loudspeaker-switchboard-telephone system is installed in the kitchen to enable such a housewife to keep in constant, close, simultaneous contact with her neighbors, her dining nook, her laundry room, her play room, her back porch and her mother.)⁶

Then there is the technique of "*Utter Irrelevance*," whereby an employee, aware of his incompetence, makes no pretense of doing the job, substituting pleasurable busy work which is utterly irrelevant. The authors comment:

In industrial and commercial hierarchies, this technique is usually seen at the upper levels only. However, in domestic hierarchies, it is exceedingly common at the housewives' level. Many a woman who has reached her level of incompetence as wife and/or mother achieves a happy, successful *Substitution* by devoting her time and energy to *Utter Irrelevance* and leaving husband and children to look after themselves.⁷

An illustration shows the housewife as horsewoman ready to set out on her presumably daily ride.

There are no examples of competent housewives.

It is puzzling why the "incompetent housewife" category was included in the book at all. The "domestic hierarchy" bears no analogy to the work hierarchy described by the authors. In the household, status and therefore job is determined by class in the case of servants (as in the book's class-biased examples) and by socially and sex-

ually defined roles in the case of family members (husband/father, wife/mother, children, in that order), and not by ability to perform one's assigned job. Nor is there a promotion ladder from one position to another. The wife who manages money well and is more adept than her husband at fixing things is not promoted to the position and title of husband. The child who skillfully cares for a younger sibling is not automatically promoted to the title and position of mother. Would the authors argue that the incompetent housewife was so competent in her "job" as charming, sweet young maiden that she was thereby "promoted" to housewife by the would-be husband (who had perhaps already reached his level of incompetence as a bachelor)? Or is there some intermediate level of "bride" that has been overlooked? There are tantalizing possibilities.

In thus misapplying the "incompetent housewife" category to the Peter Principle and in ignoring women as a category in the world of work (i.e., paid work), the authors jeopardize the validity of the Peter Principle itself. More serious, they call to question the premise on which the principle is based, a premise concerning the nature and persistence of hierarchies. To the authors, the whole promotion ladder system and resulting incompetency theory exist because we live in a world of hierarchies. The authors never discuss why *men* want things to be ranked and ordered. The word *power* is not mentioned.

Yet hierarchies feed those that seek to dominate others. Hierarchies maintain themselves by preserving inequalities of power. Those at the lower ranks keep their place, following unquestioningly the orders of those on the levels above them. In the work hierarchy—especially in modern bureaucracies of industry and government—lower ranks are filled mostly by women. It serves the interests of those in the upper levels, who are mostly men, to keep the lower ranks, filled by women, in their assigned place.

What would happen if at insurance companies, universities, retail establishments, banks, factories, at businesses, industries, and services of countless kinds, women employees suddenly walked off their jobs? Icelandic women did just that a few years ago. "In a massive show of solidarity," almost all of Iceland's 60,000 women went on strike, either staying away from their jobs or leaving their home tasks undone.⁸

Instead, they attended a huge rally in the center of the capital city of Reykjavik, creating a massive traffic jam. According to *The Boston Globe* report, the "strike was almost 100 percent effective."⁹ The telephone system stopped because there were no switchboard operators. Newspapers were not published because almost all of Iceland's typesetters are women. Theaters closed with no actresses; airline flights were cancelled with no stewardesses. With nursery schools closed, "businessmen were forced to take their children to the office with them."¹⁰ Schoolchildren were untaught as 65% of teachers are women. The institutions of the society, and the men who managed them, could not function. In short, there was no one to do the work men are unwilling to do. There was no one to take on extra responsibilities or perform extra services—without extra pay. And there was no one to make decisions incompetent male employees are incapable of making.

When women employees perform competently, and often above and beyond the call of duty, unlike men, they are not rewarded with a promotion. Quite the opposite. "You're the best secretary I've ever had; I don't know what I'd do without you." ("If she goes, the place will collapse. If I pay her what she's worth she'll be earning more than I am.") "Suppose you get pregnant. Then where will the company be?" ("We don't want a woman in that job.") "The pressures are too great; you'd have to work nights," ("Women are too emotional for managerial jobs.")

By contrast, men are watched and singled out. They are expected to move up. Women are not. If a female employee wants a promotion, she must ask...and ask. She is not singled out—at least for that reason. Affirmative action and anti-discrimination laws, have not automatically opened job opportunities for women. The woman is asked to demonstrate her qualifications. The burden of proof is on the woman to show that *she* is competent. Unlike men, her paper qualifications are rarely enough to claim for her the higher level job.

We find here a curious upending of the Peter Principle. No woman will be promoted to a job unless she is competent to fill it. Since she passes through fire to get it, she is undoubtedly over-competent, suggesting a second corollary to THE PATRICIA PRINCIPLE:

EVERY POST FILLED BY A FEMALE
TENDS TO BE OCCUPIED BY AN EM-
PLOYEE WHO IS OVER-COMPETENT TO
CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES.

This corollary is progressively more apparent the higher the rank. Perhaps the best examples of such over-competence are the few women who reach high level in politics. Can we say the same for the men in public life?

For the most part, however, women remain in low level jobs. Despite their high level of competence, women have little access to policy-making and limited influence on the incompetent men who have authority to make decisions. And so things continue to go wrong: we have milk cartons that leak, appliances that won't work, cars that are unsafe, a polluted environment.

Am I claiming that there is an insidious plot on the part of male employees to keep women employees down? Am I suggesting that women by their very nature are more competent than men? Not necessarily—although there may be glimmerings of truth in such assumptions.

I do contend that an intimate relationship exists between hierarchies and sexism, i.e., the belief that women as a group are inferior and the perpetuation of that belief in practices and institutions. In our society, sexism supports hierarchic structures, and hierarchies support sexism. They feed on each other.

The hierarchic world—from our political institutions to the corporate structure to the military—is male dominated. Men who rule defend and cling to their power structures even to the point of destruction. When one hierarchy crumbles, they frantically and blindly build another. To the extent that women as a category form a convenient group for those on top to use to maintain themselves in power, sex bias is a means by which the hierarchy and the class structure underlying it will be perpetuated. Racial groups, ethnic minorities, religious sects, are all used by power hierarchies in the same manner.

Women can deal with the hierarchal system in a number of ways. They might opt out, leaving the men to the competitive in-fighting of their beloved hierarchies and letting the pyramid crumble when deprived of its base. While this idea has its charms, it is neither economically practical (most women work because they have to, and not

for "pin money"), nor a real solution. A new group of over-competent, underpaid workers would no doubt be found to keep the system going. To perpetuate the class structure and aid and abet racism or other ethnic discrimination is not an attractive option. Women face a choice between the Scylla of having no power in an exploitative system and the Charybdis of fighting their way into the power hierarchies for their share of power's rewards.

Gaining power, even in the present system, brings a dividend and an opportunity. Having been kept out of the promotion ladder system, women comprise an unusually high proportion of over-competents in the work force. As this group begins to reach decision-making levels, the decisions are bound to improve. Telephones might actually begin to work, foods might contain fewer poisons, air might even start to be breathable. This is the dividend of women gaining power.

The opportunity provided to women gaining power is the chance to do something about the hierarchies themselves. This does not mean reversing current power relationships, i.e., oppressing men instead of women. Nor does it mean a total retreat from power—an illusion unfortunately shared by certain radicals and liberals alike as the solution to our ills. It does mean seeking to change the nature and structure of power relationships so that no individual or group will be able to use the accident of sex—or race, nationality, religion, or mental or physical qualities of any kind—to dominate or control any other individual or group.

Reducing our structures to human scale is one way to start. Evolving structures in which there is freedom for people to create, contribute to, and change those structures is a further goal. Then *The Peter Principle* and *THE PATRICIA PRINCIPLE* can be laid to rest—which was the point all along.

Footnotes

¹Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969).

²*Ibid.*, p. 25.

³*Ibid.*, p. 27 (emphasis in original).

⁴*Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 117.

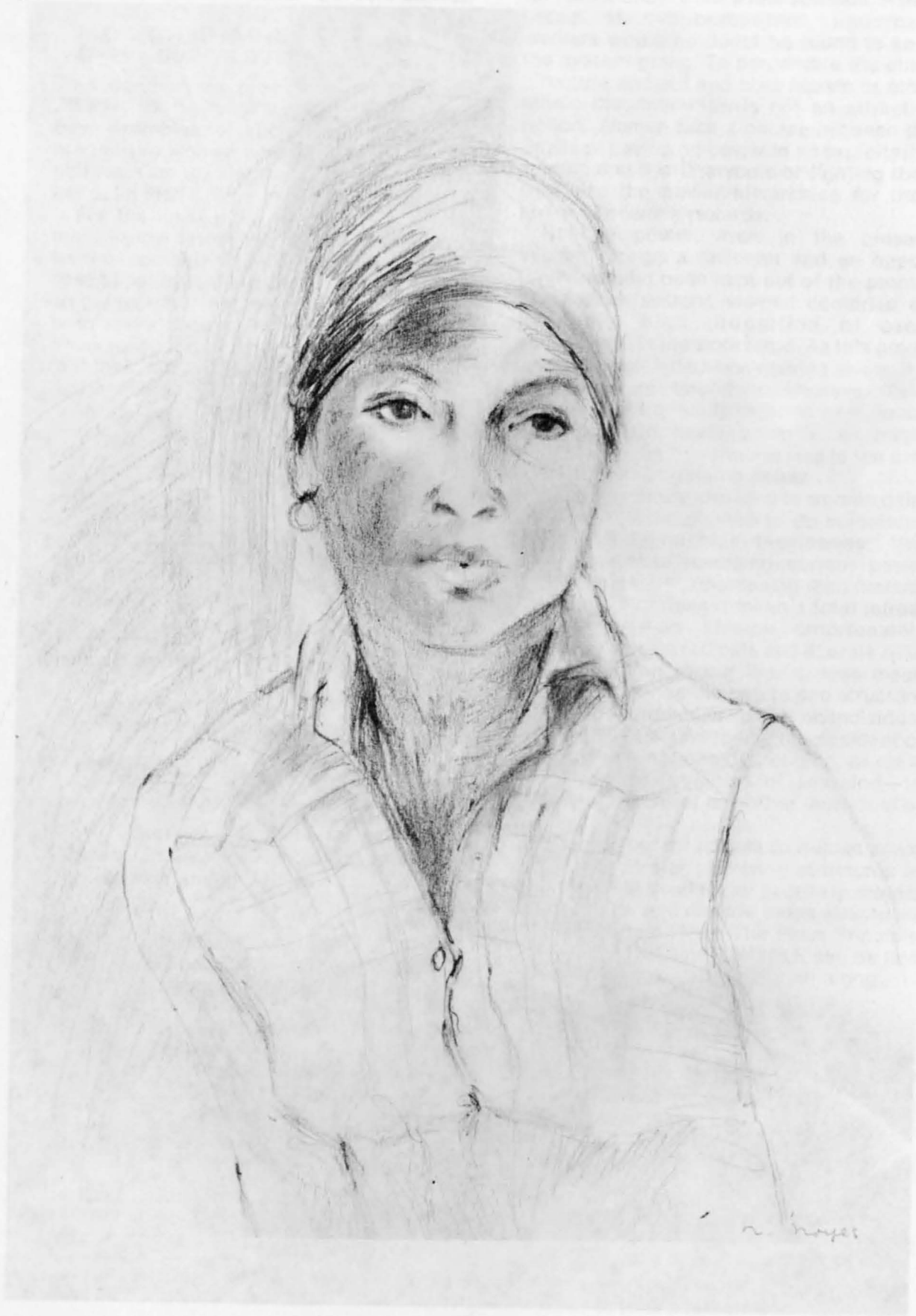
⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 135-36 (emphasis in original).

⁸*The Boston Globe*, October 25, 1975, p.1.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*





Today I know why Sylvia
and Anne died—
Too much contradiction,
Too many paradoxes
A sense of strength in the
face of constant weakness
Old ways attacking new thoughts
Can't go any further. A wall.
Push—Smash
Heavy, heart palpitations
The breath is being choked out
of me too

--Darlene Bacheller

THE CHAOS, BIRTH
by Darlene Bacheller

I, woman, blooming and ready to bite,
hug, caress, challenge the world

I, child, discovering my arms, legs,
toes, fingers.

These things hanging down really
can do something. They can run, swim.
And toes, great for digging in sand.
(long, funny-looking, mine)

Arms for stretching. Hands for
holding. Fingers—reaching for
everything I used to be afraid
to grasp.

I bubble with excitement—the
child, the woman—and
scream NOW! ME!



Rudolf

FORGET

by Eva Apfelbaum

Forget that you have been
A tree opening to blossom
Forget the tender leaves
That framed the blooms.
The fragrance has feathered,
Flown off the foliage nest.
Stand strong,
Stand,
Stand erect,
Bareness is the only beauty
You now possess.

WHITE HAIR

by Eva Apfelbaum

White hair
One by one
In the field of my head
They come and grow
Lengthening their silvery stalks.
And my fingers
Just like in a field
Are driven to pluck.
The only difference
Is that under the clouds
I gather not time but flowers.
But here, by the bathroom wall
I pull out time, wishing it dead
And since only living hair grows
On a living head
I am weeding a persistent flower bed.

AN UNDERSTANDING WOMAN

by Florence Liberfarb

You say
I do not understand
You.
I do.
Under is a word
I have long stood for.
Am I not under
Your protection?
Your guidance?
Your influence?
Your care?

Lately, you admit
I have been
Underpaid,
Underestimated,
Underdeveloped.
Do you also admit
I am your
Underling,
Underdog,
Underpinning?

I understand you.
I do.
And I am beginning
To understand me.
I believe we are equal
We two,
Under heaven
And
Under the sheet.

Yesterday

FACTORY SONG

Come all ye ladies of Lowell,
I'd have you to understand,
We are going to leave the factory,
And away to our native land.

While in the sable shades of night,
With curtains round our head;
The watchman calls, the lamp is brought,
To light us from our bed.

Then we arise and all prepare
To receive corporeal food;
And some complain, while others say
That theirs is rich and good.

The factory bell begins to ring,
And we must all obey;
And each their own employment mind,
Or else be turned away.

We then into the carding room,
With cheerful hearts engage;
To labor in the dust and dirt,
The youth of every age.

And when the gate is hoisted high,
The water swiftly flows;
And each to their own station move,
And doth the machinery goes.

The rumbling wheels and rattling bands,
All in succession roll;
The regulator swiftly moves,
And regulates the whole.

It is a wonder how that man
Could such machinery make;
A thousand wheels in union move,
Without the least mistake.

The bales of cotton soon brought,
And from the picker flows;
Swift through the cards and brakers come,
And to the speeder goes.

With rapid flight the speeder flies,
'Tis pleasing to behold;
The ropeing round the bobbins wind,
One half can never be told.

The next we know the spinners call
For ropeing to be brought;
Its carried from the carding room,
And on their spindles caught.

Come listen friends and you I'll tell,
What spinners they can do;
The ropeing they will quick convert
To wrap and filling too.

Another sight I now behold,
It is a pleasing scene;
The wrap is taken soon as spun,
And wound around the beam.

These soon is carried out of sight
Into dressing room;
It's wrapped and dressed all complete,
And fitted for the loom.

The sleigh and harness is prepared,
Each thread for to commence;
The looms are placed in rows through,
The weavers stand between.

The shuttle now is swiftly thrown,
It flies from end to end;
And they stand ready all the while,
Each broken thread to mend.

The best of weavers do not think,
Because they hither go;
That they are better than their friends,
That work in rooms below.

Six thousand yards from day to day,
If I am rightly told,
Is carded well, and spun and wove,
And carried to be sold.

When you my friends these lines behold,
Think not I've done my best;
But know that all I've left behind,
I'm leaving for the rest.

I hope all those who have the skill,
To view the least mistake;
Will start anew, the work review,
And much improvement make.

This corporation now is good,
It's raising with some others;
May friendship reign throughout the whole,
And all unite as brothers.*

--Anonymous
c. 1830 (or earlier)

*This term is used, despite the fact that the "song" describes women workers—Ed.

AUNT ROSE

by Charles A. Gargiulo

I remember my Aunt Rose. She was a fixture in my boyhood and I loved no one more. She was born with a bone problem in her left foot that permanently twisted it so she had to walk on her ankle instead of the sole of her foot. She needed crutches to walk.

She lived with her husband Claurence on the second floor of a three-story, gray tenement building in the heart of Lowell's Little Canada. She was a recluse in a city. Until she was forcibly evicted from her apartment by Urban Renewal in 1965 (she died a week later), I never saw her leave her home.

Outside of Claurence, occasional family visits, and a weekly home-visit by a priest for communion, she had no contact with the outside world. She stubbornly refused all offers to be helped down the stairs. I remember that it seemed a bit strange, but it never really bothered me too much (although I did wonder how she met Claurence if she never went outside). Her marriage seemed very uneventful and quiet. Claurence and Aunt Rose never seemed to argue; actually, they hardly ever talked. He'd buy the food and she'd cook it.

Her main activity was religion. She read religious books and pamphlets. Although she was poor, she owned dozens of expensive rosary beads and fancy statues that decorated all four rooms. She bought imported holy water from Lourdes and swore by its healing powers. (I remember one night when she was asleep I sprinkled some on her crippled foot and cried because she was not miraculously cured.)

I think I was the only person she ever talked to openly. Even as a young child I noticed the snickers her life-style evoked from adults. It was not surprising to me that she had little to do with others. When people did visit her she was very polite and cheerful, but she appeared uncomfortable.

Dutifully, she said at least ten rosaries a day. She was in love with Pope John XXIII and I can recall watching her sitting in agony the days before his death. When he died I saw her cry for the first and last time. She swore that someday he would be declared a saint.

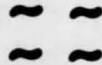
Every day she sat for hours near the window that overlooked Austin Street, and she watched children grow into adults for over forty years. She lived out her fantasies in the lives of the children with healthy legs. For a few hours every day they became her existence.

When I stayed overnight she told me bedtime stories. After putting some snuff between her gum and cheek, she would make up tales using cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck as the heroes. Almost every story had a witch or a monster and I never tired of them. They were always fun, adventurous stories. However, one night shortly before she died, she told me a little story that I still remember as if she told me yesterday. It was about a boy who lived with his mother, father and grandmother. The grandmother was unable to walk and everyone considered her feeble-minded. The boy's parents felt burdened by

her so they seated her in a space near the stove. The only attention she received was at mealtime when they gave her a bowl of food. One day the parents saw the boy carving wood into a rounded object. They asked him what he was making and he replied it was a bowl for them to eat out of when they got old.

All those early years I had spent thinking of her as a happy, contented, slightly eccentric woman, were suddenly gone. She was a physically handicapped woman who

was conditioned not to complain. Throughout her life she appeared cheerful, not expressing her bitterness at being mocked and ignored. She felt pain, but she used religion to mask it. She had completely lost hope of reaching fulfillment in this world, so she placed all hope on religion and its promise of afterlife. Before I could overcome the shock of her story and relate it to my 13-year-old mind, she died. She died before I could tell her I understood and cared.



A question from
Daughter to Mother:
"Why did you (do you)
perpetuate the illusion
If you found so much
misery in its consummation?"
--Darlene Bacheller



